

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 IO-13 /090 W
-----107486 251459Z /45

R 251344Z AUG 78
FM AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7588
INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 CAPE TOWN 1424

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, SF
SUBJ: LABOUR PARTY LOSES AN ELECTION, DEBATES CONSTITUTIONAL
PROPOSALS

REF: CAPE TOWN 1377

1. THE LABOUR PARTY SUFFERED A SETBACK LAST WEEK WITH THE LOSS TO FREEDOM PARTY BY 92 VOTES OF THE TAFELBERG BY-ELECTION FOR THE COLORED REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL (CRC). THE TURNOUT WAS LIGHT, WITH ONLY 15 PERCENT OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS GOING TO THE POLLS (27 PERCENT IN 1975).
2. FREEDOM PARTY DREW 1115 VOTES, COMPARED TO MEAGER 32 VOTES THREE YEARS AGO. LABOUR PARTY, ON THE OTHER HAND, SAW ITS VOTE FALL BY 60 PERCENT, FROM 2697 IN 1975 TO 1023.
3. WITH THIS DEFEAT, AND SEVERAL OTHER DEFECTIONS OR CROSS-OVERS SINCE 1975 ELECTION, LABOUR PARTY HAS SEEN ITS ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN CRC DISAPPEAR. AFTER 1975 ELECTION, LABOUR

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HELD 34 SEATS IN CRC. IT NOW HOLDS ON 28. BOTH THE FREEDOM PARTY AND THE INDEPENDENT BLOC HAVE 16 SEATS IN CRC.

4. LABOUR PARTY DEFEAT IN TAFELBERG IS ATTRIBUTABLE TO VARIETY OF CAUSES. PARTY LEADERS CLAIM PUBLICLY THAT THEY "SACRIFICED" THE SEAT WHEN THEY URGED COLORED VOTERS OF WALVIS BAY NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTION. (REFTEL.

APPRENTLY, ONLY A FEW DOZEN VOTERS WERE ACTUALLY CAST IN WALVIS BAY). PARTY LEADER SONNY LEON SAID THAT THIS CAUSED CONFUSION IN MIND OF CAPE TOWN VOTERS, WHO THOUGHT THAT BOYCOTT PLEA TO WALVIS BAY VOTERS APPLIED TO THEM AS WELL. LABOUR PARTY ALSO ACCUSED NATIONALIST PARTY OF GIVING CLANDESTINE SUPPORT TO FREEDOM PARTY ELECTION CAMPAIGN. NATIONAL PARTY HAS DENIED ANY SUCH ASSISTANCE WAS GIVEN.

5. PRIVATELY, PARTY LEADERS ADMIT THAT OVERCONFIDENCE AND LACK OF EFFORT WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEFEAT. ANOTHER CONTRIBUTING FACTOR WAS THAT LABOUR PARTY CANDIDATE, ASSISTANT PARTY SECRETARY WALLY MILLER, DID NOT HAVE GRASS ROOTS SUPPORT. INDEED, THE SALT RIVER BRANCH OF THE PARTY DISBANDED ON EVE OF THE ELECTION IN PROTEST OF THE PARTY'S FAILURE TO PUT UP A SALT RIVER NOMINEE AS CANDIDATE. ANOTHER FACTOR WAS CALL TO BOYCOTT ELECTION BY ISLAMIC COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA (MANY TAFELBERG VOTERS ARE MOSLEM) AND SCHOTSCHE KLOOF CIVIC ASSOCIATION.

6. ELECTION RESULTS WERE HAILED BY COLORED RELATIONS MINISTER SMIT, FREEDOM PARTY, AND DIE BURGER AS A TURNING POINT: A REJECTION BY COLORED VOTERS OF "BLACK POWER," I.E., THE LABOUR PARTY ALLIANCE WITH INKATHA IN SABA, AND A GROWING DESIRE FOR COOPERATION WITH GOVT'S NEW CONSTITUTIONAL PLANS.

7 COMMENT: TOO MUCH SHOULD NOT BE MADE OF LABOUR PARTY'S LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BY-ELECTION DEFEAT. ONE SWALLOW DOES NOT MAKE A SUMMER. HOWEVER, THERE IS A GROWING FRUSTRATION AMONG COLOREDS WITH THE STERILITY OF COLORED POLITICS (THE CRC IS NOT ABLE TO "DELIVER THE GOODS") AND A CERTAIN MEASURE OF DISILLUSIONMENT WITH THE LABOUR PARTY LEADERSHIP.

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8. THERE IS ALSO A LEADERSHIP SPLIT OVER QUESTION OF LABOUR PARTY PARTICIPATION IN NEW CONSTITUTIONAL PLAN. CRUX OF QUESTION IS WHETHER OR NOT PARTY SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN ELECTIONS FOR PROPOSED NEW 92-SEAT COLOURED PARLIAMENT. SONNY LEON, WHILE OPPOSING THE NEW CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS, FAVORED LABOUR PARTY ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION SHOULD THEY BECOME LAW. HE ARGUES THAT BOYCOTTING ELECTIONS WOULD ONLY PLAY INTO HANDS OF FREEDOM PARTY, AND THAT LABOUR PARTY SHOULD WORK WITHIN THE NEW DISPENSATION "TO WRECK IT IN THE SAME WAY THAT WE HAVE DONE WITH THE CRC."

9. LEON THUS HAS CHOSEN TO FIGHT ON THE MIDDLE GROUND, AND THUS HAS BECOME VULNERABLE TO ATTACK BOTH FROM THOSE IN LABOUR PARTY AND SABA WHO FEEL THAT THE PARTY SHOULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH NEW CONSTITUTION, AND OTHERS WHO FEEL THAT EXISTING POLITICS OF PROTEST IS A BARREN POLICY AND ONLY ALLOWS THE GOVT TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE IN DETERMINING THE POLITICAL FUTURE OF THE COLORED PEOPLE.

10. PARTY DEFEAT IN TAFELBERG ELECTION AND APPARENT INCONSISTENT STAND ON CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS (AGAINST THEM, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BUT WILLING TO PARTICIPATE) HAVE HURT SONNY LEON'S IMAGE IN AND OUT OF THE PARTY. SO HAVE REPORTS THAT HE HAS MET WITH NATIONALIST POLITICIANS SUCH AS MP JAN MARAIS, WHO ALLEGEDLY URGED LEON TO ACCEPT CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS. THERE ARE RUMORS THAT LABOUR PARTY EXECUTIVE IS SO SEVERELY SPLIT ON CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS THAT LEADERSHIP CHANGES WILL BE FORTHCOMING SOON.

11. NEW CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS ARE LIKELY TO BE DISCUSSED AT THIS YEAR'S COLOURED PERSONS REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL, OPENING SEPTEMBER 8. THEY ALSO WILL BE SUBJECT OF MORE HEATED PARTY DEBATE AT ANNUAL NATIONAL LABOUR PARTY CONGRESS IN BLOEMFONTEIN DECEMBER 28.
AHLGREN

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